

# MINUTES

# Owens Valley Groundwater Authority

## Board Members:

INDIAN CREEK-WESTRIDGE CSD	Sarah Petersen	BIG PINE CSD	BryAnna Vaughan
CITY OF BISHOP	Karen Kong	LONE PINE PAIUTE SHOSHONE TRIBE	Mel Joseph
COUNTY OF INYO	Scott Marcellin	OWENS VALLEY COMMITTEE	Mary Roper

June 25, 2025

The Owens Valley Groundwater Authority meeting was called to order at approximately 2:06 pm at the Lone Pine Paiute Shoshone Reservation Wellness Building, Lone Pine, CA.

### 1. Pledge of allegiance

Ted Williams led the pledge of allegiance.

Loren Joseph, Tribal Elder of the Lone Pine Paiute Shoshone Tribe, provided an opening prayer.

### 2. Introductions

The Board introduced themselves with one absence, BryAnna Vaughan, Big Pine CSD, and one alternate Board member present, Ted Williams with Indian Creek Westridge CSD.

### 3. Public Comment

The Chairperson opened the public comment period.

Sally Manning wished to make a change to her comment in the 2-27-25 minutes stating the 5-acre pond affected by the pumping with DWP operations at the fish hatchery is not on DWP land but is on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land so it is subject to the Owens Valley Groundwater Authority (OVGA) Board oversight.

Mel Joseph requested that items 6 and 9 be switched. Karen Kong suggested the presentation (item 9) go after item 6, the financial report. Mel Joseph stated the presentation should have been named “Water Banking in the Owens Valley”.

### 4. Approval of minutes from the February 27, 2025, OVGA Board meeting

Motion to approve the February 27, 2025, minutes with the requested change to Sally Mannings comment, the fish hatchery is on BLM land, not DWP. Mel Joseph, seconded by Scott Marcellin. Motion passed with two abstentions.

John Vallejo stated for the record and the change to the minutes, federal lands (BLM) as mentioned earlier are not subject to the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA).

## **5. Board Member Reports**

Ted Williams stated Indian Creek Westridge CSD is considering the possibility of consolidating with Sierra Highlands CSD and Brookside MWC. He said the state is pushing for consolidation of water systems.

Mel Joseph stated the Lone Pine Paiute Shoshone Tribe (LPPST) was pleased to host the Owens Valley Groundwater Authority meeting.

## **6. OVGA Financial Report**

Laura Piper provided the OVGA financial report stating the cash balance is \$246,331.62 with 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter interest of \$72.30 and the following expenses: \$5,019 in consultant costs, \$7,844.90 in staff charges, and \$2,437.50 for insurance.

## **7. Presentation by Mel Joseph on Owens Dry Lake (20 minutes)**

Mel Joseph provided a brief overview of the presentation regarding concerns on water issues in the southern end of the valley and water banking. April Zrelak, LPPSR, provided a detailed presentation on groundwater banking, managed recharge, calculating water extraction, and possible water banking impacts on the aquifer near the LPPSR. The Board and staff discussed this matter in detail and at length.

BryAnna Vaughan joined the meeting at 2:57pm.

Sally Manning asked if LADWP does groundwater banking on their own land, would they be subject to Department of Water Resources (DWR) oversight. April Zrelak stated yes, and they will need a permit even on their own land. Sally Manning stated during the Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) days, all the focus was on groundwater pumping, but the other part of the equation is what's coming in and how it's managed. She stated there is no coordination on the recharge. Kristen Stipinov asked if the California State Lands Commission must show a lease for everything that happens on the lakebed, she is curious about the power dynamics. April Zrelak provided background for her. John Vallejo stated to avoid any misconceptions regarding the applicability of the OVGA on the lake, this Board can do as it deems appropriate with management actions and LADWP can challenge it if they like. He stated many of the lake issues are California State Lands issues and California State Lands are exempted from OVGA oversight. He also stated as far as input from Inyo County on water banking, the LTWA has an express provision regarding groundwater banking

## **8. Amendments to the Conflict-of-Interest Code**

Dr. Holly Alpert stated the California Fair Political Practices Commission has requested the OVGA Conflict of Interest Code be amended based on a new government code that was added January 1, 2025. It requires the Directors, alternate Directors, and Executive Manager file directly with the Fair Political Practices Commission and are not covered by the OVGA Conflict of Interest Code. Motion made by BryAnna Vaughan to approve the amended Conflict-of-Interest Code with a second by Mary Roper. Motion passed.

## **9. Approval of Water Year 2023 OVGA Annual Report and direction to submit to DWR**

Tim Moore stated at the 2-27-25 OVGA Board meeting, he presented a draft 2023 OVGA annual report. He stated following the meeting, the public comment period was opened and then closed March 31, 2025, with one comment received. He provided a formal response to the comment which is in the updated version of the 2023 OVGA annual report and requested direction to upload the final 2023 OVGA annual report to DWR website. Scott Marcelin made a

motion to approve moving forward with the 2023 OVGA Annual Report with a second by BryAnna Vaughan. Motion passed.

#### **10. DWR's determination of incomplete for the GSP and direction to staff**

Dr. Holly Alpert stated that on April 14, 2025, a letter was received from the Department of Water Resources (DWR) providing notification that the OVGA's GSP was deemed incomplete based on their first review of the GSP. She stated the reason for this determination is because Mono County and the Tri-Valley Groundwater Management District pulled out of the OVGA after the GSP was submitted, so DWR stated the OVGA's GSP no longer covers the entire subbasin. She asked the Board for direction and provided a few possible scenarios. The Board directed staff to reach out to Mono County and Tri Valley Groundwater Management District to see if the OVGA and Mono/TVGMD could reach an agreement, and if that was not possible, to wait for the DWR window to open and apply for a basin boundary adjustment.

Kristen Stipinov stated she knows that Mono/TVGMD are their own GSAs and would eventually be subject to SGMA and wondered if the conversation with their agencies could be framed of how we could work together with the resources this agency has, as together we are more powerful. Sally Manning stated yesterday at a Technical Group meeting Adam Perez, LADWP, mentioned something they are doing at Long Valley Dam so they could drain Crowley Lake in case of an emergency. She stated that opens Long Valley that has been low ranked forever and the County is not thinking ahead. She stated a lot of land in Mono is owned by LADWP and ripe for exploitation.

#### **11. Meeting schedule**

The Board and staff agreed to have the next meeting in late 2025 when a draft of the 2024 annual report is available for review.

Mel Joseph stated in the presentation that was put together, they thought long and hard about the effects on the southern end of the County and the LPPSR and the comment made about the Board of Supervisors was that previous Board members commented on water banking and he doesn't feel that water banking has been brought forward to the current Supervisors so they understand the options. He stated there is direct conflict with this Board and today's presentation was about educating.

Staff was asked about the well registration. Tim Moore stated in total we have received 25-26% compliance. April Zrelak stated this body has enforcement power. The Chairperson stated that it could be discussed at a future meeting. April Zrelak asked if it is self-determined whether an individual is a de minimus user or not. She stated a de minimus user in the area was offering to sell their water. Mel Joseph stated de minimus users in Cartago were letting road staff use their water. The Chairperson asked if the Board would like to have an earlier meeting to discuss enforcement and the Board concurred. John Vallejo stated it would be prudent to have a closed session prior. Thomas Swab stated there should not be a closed session and the public should hear what needs to be said, he stated closed session is not the answer. John Vallejo stated a closed session would be about possible exposure to litigation.

Mel Joseph stated this will be LPPSR's last meeting on this Board. He stated they feel they can do a better job on the other side of the table.

#### **12. Adjourn**

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at approximately 3:55 pm.